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THE
D E B A T E
IN THE *K Great Britain*
HOUSE OF COMMONS,
ON THE
R E P E A L
OF THE
CORPORATION AND TEST ACTS,

M A R C H 2d, 1790.

CONTAINING THE SPEECHES OF

Mr. FOX,
Sir HENRY HOUGHTON,
Mr. PITT,
Mr. POWIS,
Mr. BURKE,
Mr. S. SMITH,
Mr. TIERNEY,

Mr. MARTIN,
Mr. BEAUFOY,
Mr. YORKE,
Mr. W. SMITH,
Mr. WILBERFORCE,
AND
Sir Wm. DOLBEN.

L O N D O N :

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March 3, 1790.

MR. Fox moved, That the Act of the 13th of Charles II. for the well-governing and regulating Corporations, &c. and the Act of the 25th of Charles II. for preventing dangers which may arise from Popish Recusants, &c. might be read,

The same being read by the Clerk at the Table, Mr. Fox moved, that he have leave to make a Motion, it being past four o'clock. The same being granted,

Mr. Fox again rose and said, that from the great expectation which the question he was about to submit to the House had raised in that House, and the country, he held it necessary in him to say a few words why he moved the question which had in two former Sessions been moved by another Honourable Gentleman, and to

which he had been contented to give his most cordial support.—He begged to assure the House, that he had not obtruded himself forward with the motion; he came forward from the wish and solicitation of the parties who conceived themselves oppressed by the Acts; they conceived it best to trust the cause in his hands, though he was confident it had been in better hands when brought before the House on former occasions: he felt it, however, to be the cause of truth and liberty, and could not, therefore, hesitate to bring it forward, though he did so in favour of men who had on former occasions acted hostilely to him.—It afforded him, however, some occasion of triumph and vanity in observing, that those men who had most violently opposed him on former points of much importance, had, fundamentally and radically, a good opinion of him; for with no one, whose principles they radically objected to, was it to be expected that they would entrust their interests.—He could not help thinking that the present moment was that which peculiarly called on political men for an explanation of their public opinions, and he would then state his opinion on religious toleration, and in so doing he remarked, that however some might deplore what had been done in France, he was of opinion that it neither merited contempt nor ridicule, but was highly praise-worthy, as the French were recurring to original principles, to obtain the rights of men. Persecution upon its original principle was consistent, but in these enlightened days it was considered as an abominable and detestable crime; its first principle was to encrease morality by enforcing one opinion and exterminating all others; like madness, its characteristic was, acting consistently upon wrong principles; it went on this grand error, that one man could judge of the opinion of another, better than he who entertained it:—He should have imagined that the doctrines of Christianity would have proved a remedy for this error; but the reverse had turned out to be the fact, and torture and death had been introduced to force men from their religious opinions into such as those in power entertained, and conceived the best to ensure future happiness.

Toleration, which went in direct contrary principles to persecution, he need not, he said, inform the House, was of a very modern date in any part of the world; it took place in Great-Britain in the

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reign of King William, but was then far from being complete, as none could be tolerated except those who subscribed to thirty-four out of the thirty-nine Articles.—Persecution went originally, he said, upon a principle of kindness; it went first to the promotion of unity of opinion, and the extinction of those opinions which were conceived to be erroneous, and had ever, as it always must do, failed in its endeavour. Toleration on the contrary was founded, and that successfully, on philosophy and reason, on a just diffidence and doubt of opinion, which every friend of Toleration must entertain; if he sees evil consequences attached to the opinions of another, it will be sufficient for him to reject those opinions, without imputing the evil intentions that he conceived to flow from them, to those who professed them, and who might not think of such consequences. A friend of Toleration ought to trust a Roman Catholic for his good professions, and not attribute to him, from the opinions held of his profession, an intention of murder, and of the subversion of the Government under which he lived. It would be base and illiberal in any man to say that every duty of morality was not practised in countries where the Roman Catholic religion was professed; it was fair therefore to infer that whatever our opinions of their tenets might be, that they did not entertain an idea of their leading to such dangerous inferences.

The language of persecution was arrogant, contracted, and haughty; it said, “I know the consequences of your opinion better than you know them yourself;” the language of Toleration was far different; that when to a dislike of opinion, but said, “Since you profess such and such an opinion, I will not believe that you think such dangerous inferences may be drawn from it, as I do:” —The latter mode of judging was, he said, less liable to error than the former, and far more adapted to human affairs;—it was right to judge from the fruit to the tree—from the effect to the cause; other modes of judging were liable to continual error:—Man must judge of acts, not of opinions:—His opinion was, that all political and religious Tests were absurd, and that the only Test to be gone by, was the Test of a man’s actions. But with respect to the Test Laws, he could not avoid remarking, that a man might, in defiance of them, fill the first situations in the country, though hostile

to the Constitution; the Law considered no man's opinion to be injurious to the State, until such opinion was brought into action, and then the Law was fully competent to punish the offender.

The custom of the country had, he said, exploded all political Tests; but though they were done away directly, they were continued indirectly, and under false pretences; they were continued by means of religious Tests, with which the House had nothing to do; for to them it was a matter of little concern who were Trinitarians, or Unitarians, or who Baptists, of Infants, or Adults.

The Test Act, he said, was a measure enforced soon after the civil wars, and was calculated to keep from office all anti-monarchical men: but he reprobated such an Act, as acting under false pretences; and would prefer a Monarchical Test at once, for the Test now given went but to guess at a man's opinion, and might admit those who were hostile to every political opinion on the Constitution, while it acted against those who were for the Constitution. He turned this argument in several points of view, contending that it was absurd and nugatory to impose such Test.—He considered it unnecessary to go into what he conceived to be the praise-worthy conduct of the Dissenters from the æra of the Revolution downwards; because he wished to put all merit or demerit out of the present question, for allowing every species of demerit to exist on their part, the Test ought not to be continued in force, as it acted against the rights of a body of men.—He understood, and he was sorry to believe it was too true, that a report had gone abroad which led to the utmost persecution—what he meant was, an intention to separate the individuals from the cause they espoused; he contended on the unfairness of such mode, and that no real friend to Toleration would countenance it; for every friend of religious Toleration would suppose the opinions of another to be founded on good intentions.—He would consider it impossible to disapprove of a whole body for the conduct of individuals, who formed a part of that body; and that it would be unjust to deprive one single individual, in a hundred, of his rights, for the conduct of the ninety-nine that formed the other part of the society. He contended, therefore, that all merit or demerit in the body of Dissenters, was entirely out
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of the question, and that the House had alone, that night, to decide on general principles.

Tho' he was averse to merits or demerits having any weight, he could not avoid observing that the conduct of the Dissenters had been highly meritorious; and when this country had been distracted with internal troubles and alarms, and with insurrections, not of warm debates in that House, but of insurrections in arms, which had taken place twice since the Revolution, that they had stood forward with their lives and property in its defence; and that by their exertions, the rebellions in 1715, and 1745, were rendered unsuccessful, the Constitution maintained and the Brunswick Family supported on the Throne. He contended that in those times the High Church were as inimical to the Family on the Throne, as the Dissenters were earnest in their support; it put him in mind of a sarcastic observation by Swift, that though he would not say that every Whig was an Infidel, yet he would say that every Infidel was a Whig; and with equal truth he would observe, that in the times he had alluded to, though every Jacobite might not be a High Churchman, yet every High Churchman was a Jacobite. The generosity of the English Parliament was, he said, particularly worthy of notice, in consequence of the aid afforded them by the Dissenters in 1715, and 1745, for they passed an Act of *Pardon* for all who had served in his Majesty's forces on that occasion; the Irish, still more generous, came to a vote of declaring any person who prosecuted a Dissenter for his services, an enemy to his country, and a Jacobite. After dwelling for some time on the absurdity of such acts of indemnity, he observed that by the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, we had nothing to fear, for we could not now be threatened with a civil war, with a Pretender, or with a foreign war. He next observed that no Act was ever passed in favour of those Officers who belonged to the Kirk of Scotland, because the laws were never put in force, though the Officers of that country were liable to punishment, for the acceptance of their respective offices. The House, he said, if it spoke the sentiments of generosity, would relieve those men to whom they were most obligated, from the degrading necessity of being obliged to receive a pardon for their good services, and an indemnity

demnity for their serving his Majesty in places of trust, in which they had honourably acquitted themselves.

He contended, from a speech of King William to his Parliament, that it was the wish of that Monarch, and the wish of every Prince of the Brunswick Line, to employ Dissenters of every denomination in the service of the country; and this, he said, was, of all moments, the most likely to do so, without any danger to the State. Some persons, he said, objected to such alteration from the present situation of affairs in France; but their situation, he conceived, ought not to militate against the indulgence he meant to propose, for it had been submitted to the House three years back, when no man would have ventured to predict what had since happened; as therefore, the Motion was not made in reference to the affairs of France, the affairs of that country ought not to be brought in opposition to the Motion he was about to offer to the House: there had, however, been a great very difference occasioned in Great-Britain since the last agitation of this question, a difference of circumstances he had not expected, for an attempt had been made, and he feared too successfully, to raise a High Church party.

In speaking of the Church, however, he wished arguments to be carried no farther than he carried them himself; he considered it in three points of view; first in regard to its discipline, and its abstract duties, in which it wisely avoided all that was superstitious, and retained what was essential; as such he revered and admired it, and declared himself its firm friend: the second point in which it was to be viewed, was in regard to the individuals who composed it, for some of whom he declared a respect, and for others not, which must be the case in all public bodies; but the third point in which it might be viewed, and to which his objections were strong, was when it acted as a party, and so acting, it was not only reprehensible as dangerous, but as directly militating against the constitution. The Church, he said, never interfered in politics but for mischief; it was a misfortune to the country for any religious sects to be in opposition to each other, but far greater when the Church made a part. The Church as a body was always dangerous and formidable; and they had formerly, as now, used a most powerful

powerful engine of their real or pretended fear, which was ever a signal with tyrants for oppression.

The Right Hon. Gentleman then shortly entered into the state and conduct of the Church for several years past: he exhibited them as the leaders of Jacobitism; and as, in the reign of Queen Anne, being the instigators of tumults in support of the doctrines of non-resistance and passive obedience, and that such was the cry now attempted. The Church, he said, had frequently considered itself in danger; it had sounded the alarm on the accession of the Brunswick family to the throne, and, though full of authority and power, had continued that alarm, and had given its support to rebellions; since the suppression of which it had been pretty quiet until the present year, when the cry was again renewed of the Church being in danger. He was sorry that such was the fact, and particularly so when he had been led to hope, that from the sentiments of Bishop Hoadley and other dignitaries of his time, that in these enlightened days the removal of all such restraints would have been done away by the clergy themselves.

One reason given of the Church's alarm was, that churchmen were neglectful of their duties; but to deprive the Dissenters of their rights on such account, would be a hard measure indeed, as it would be making one suffer for the neglect of another. He ridiculed all idea of the Church being in danger, and asked from whence the danger could be expected? and insisted that none could be shewn. He contended that the Test did not go to exclude men who were in opposition to the Hierarchy; but that, on the contrary, it admitted them into such places where they might injure the State, and kept them from such where they could not. He noticed the writings of Dr. Price against the Hierarchy, but insisted that there would be no more danger to the Constitution, in admitting him to any office in the State, than there was in permitting one, who objected to the present Representation of the people in Parliament, to be at the head of the Treasury; the first could not injure the Hierarchy, nor the latter the constitution of the Legislature. He wished again to ask where the danger was to the Church? No fear, he said, was to be apprehended from the Pretender, or from the Pope; the Dissenters, so far from being encreased, had

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decreased ; the Church had less enemies than usual, and its power was prodigious.

It was said that the Dissenters always argued for Toleration when undermost, but were little grantors of it when uppermost ; this, however, he contended, would not, in fact, be found to be the truth : At the Union, two Churches were established in Great-Britain, in different parts, but both considered as true ; the Kirk was established in Scotland, and the Hierarchy in England ; the Dissenters in Scotland were not, however, deprived of the right of enjoying the same offices with the Members of the Kirk ; where, had there been a Test Act, there would have been no need of an Act of Indemnity for the Episcopalians who had served in support of the Family on the Throne against the rebellions of 1715, or 1745. By the conduct of the Kirk of Scotland, it could not be said, that those who there held a contrary doctrine with the Church of England were hostile to Toleration.—In America, where the Dissenters had the upper hand, no one could say they were intolerant ; but, on the contrary, they granted Toleration to the fullest extent ; he contended that it was not decent therefore to continue such intolerant Acts in this country, especially as every year the Parliament found it was necessary to condemn them by an Act of Indemnity. The Test in Ireland had been repealed for some years, and yet the Church had there existed without danger, though surrounded by Catholics on the one hand, and Dissenters on the other : the Kirk of Scotland with little power, did the same ; and the only Church in his Majesty's dominions that thought itself in danger was the established Church of England, in the full possession of power, of extensive wealth and influence, and with an infinite number of followers : all danger therefore, to him, appeared to be chimerical, and asserted only for the purposes of oppression. It would be opposed to him, that no innovation might be suffered ; but he begged to remind the House, that the Church owed its existence to innovation ; and that to innovation, the beauty of our Constitution was obligated. Limited monarchy, he insisted, would end in absolute monarchy, if innovations were not on all occasions admitted.

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He entered shortly on the origin of the Corporation and Test Acts, which were passed immediately after the heat of the civil wars. The Corporation Act was to prevent the admission of such Dissenters who were considered to be anti-monarchical, and the Test against the Roman Catholics. He reprobated those Acts as the pillars of Constitution, and observed, that a Constitution supported by such pillars was not worth preservation. He contended at length against the disabilities thrown on Dissenters by the above Acts, as militating strongly against the principles of the Christian Religion:—He argued that no Church was in danger by the removal of such disabilities, and instanced the state of the French Church previous to the revocation of the Edict of Nantz. He condemned the conduct of a learned Bishop reported to have sent a circular letter to his Clergy, to discountenance all who supported the motion for a repeal, as unconstitutional; and remarking on the Sermon of Dr. Price, at the centenary of the Revolution, approved of its general principles, though he considered the arguments would with more propriety, have made a part of his speech, than of a sermon from a pulpit. He argued forcibly for Religion and Politics being ever kept separate, and concluded, by moving:—

“ That [this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider of so much of the said Acts as requires persons before they are admitted to any office, civil or military, or any place of trust under the Crown, to receive the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, according to the rites of the Church of England.”

Sir *Henry Hoghton* begun with saying, that he should wave taking any notice of the very able manner Mr. Beaufoy had opened the business, on two former times, when a similar motion to the present was discussed in this House, as justice had been fully done him by the Right Hon. Mover of the present Motion, the exertion of whose very distinguished abilities, was a proof how good a judge he must be of the abilities of any other. The justice of the application of the Protestant Dissenters, had been so forcibly evinced by the Honourable Mover, that he would not make any apology for his appearing a third time an advocate for

the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. Though with the rest of the Dissenters he was gratefully impressed with the liberality of the two Houses in relieving the Protestant Ministers and School-Masters from the pressure of a very severe Act; he did not consider the relief as a boon obtained by the generosity of British Parliament, but a restoration of a right unjustly withheld; and he joined in the present application, upon the ground of a claim of right. As he thought it unjust that the Protestant Dissenters should be deprived of the eligibility to civil offices, merely on account of their dissent from the established Church, after their cause had been so ably illustrated by the Right Honourable Mover, he was far from being ashamed to profess himself a Protestant Dissenter; and with pride he looked to the history of the times preceding the passing of these Acts. That he had very accurately read all the references to the Journals mentioned in the pamphlet, entitled, "The Right of the Dissenters to a full Toleration, &c." and found them very correct. They all testified the respect of the friends of civil and religious liberty to the predecessors of the present Dissenters who bravely adhered to the Patriots of those times, who resisted the violent attempts of the Crown and the Mitre; and when the Church was in danger, and their friendship asked, they always stood by them, and subjected themselves to the severity of those Acts, rather than comply with the measures of the Crown, when a toleration was offered them; lamented the animosities and rancour that prevailed in many places; was always sorry when any disrespectful language was used with regard to the established Church: that the religion of a State should always be treated with civility, that it was very disgraceful to the character and office of a Prelate, to engage in political disputes; but he was not at liberty to charge a learned Prelate with being the author of a letter to influence an election, as he did not know the fact for certain; that he had many Clergymen for his most intimate friends, and observed that the two Acts now under consideration, were one in the House of Commons, and the other in the House of Lords, attempted to be rendered perpetual; but the attempt failed.

It was, he said, proposed in Scotland to have a Test Act there as well as in England, by some persons, but was not insisted upon by the Patriots in Scotland, for fear of impeding the Union. He believed the argument urged on a former occasion was too illiberal and futile to be again renewed, that the more conscientious a Dissenter was, the more desirous he must be to have his mode of worship established, and there was no answering such an argument. He professed his good wishes to the Establishment, and said, that a prudent man would rather submit to a grievance than run the hazard of great confusion by attempting to overturn the Established Church, which he should strenuously oppose. He concluded with saying, that he did not despair of seeing the time when some of the Bishops, to the great piety of many of whom he bore his testimony, should move for the repeal of a Sacramental Test, thereby shewing them some occasion for the prostitution of a solemn rite, and convincing the world, that they were more concerned for the interest of religion, than for any temporal emoluments—That the Church of England received its special temporalities and emoluments from the State, and therefore to call the Church an ally of the State, he could not but deem very unconstitutional and assuming language.

Mr. *Martin* said, that from the moment he had the honour of entering that House as one of its Members, to the present hour, it had been with him a fixed and constant principle, and avowedly so in public and in private, that a majority of electors of every place sending Representatives to Parliament, had a constitutional right to instruct their Representatives whenever they think it expedient, to exercise that right. That his constituents had thought it expedient to instruct their Representatives to oppose the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; that therefore he thought himself bound to vote against the Repeal; at the same time it appeared to him a duty he owed to himself and the consistency of his conduct, to declare, that his private opinion upon this subject continued unchanged; and that he could not but flatter himself, that when the unhappy heats which had been kindled by jarring opinions upon this matter should have subsided, that some favourable opportunity would be embraced by the Legislature for granting spontaneously to the Dissenters, that which some persons seem to think
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they claim at this time with too much earnestness and zeal : that in the mean time he should upon this, as upon every other occasion, submit himself to the commands of his constituents, whenever they shall please to communicate them to him, and that he must in consequence of having received such commands, vote against the Motion of the Right Hon. Gentleman : that before he sat down he would beg leave to observe, that if there were any persons in that Assembly, or in the public, who felt any acrimonious disposition towards the Dissenters, he hoped such feelings would be removed, at least in some degree, by a melancholy piece of news which arrived only a few days since—that Mr. Howard, a Gentleman, who, as he was informed, was a Dissenter, had sacrificed almost every comfort of his life to the doing good ; had at length sacrificed that life in the exercise of universal beneficence towards persons of all modes of faith and religions. Mr. Martin added, that it would be the highest presumption in him to attempt the praise of such an exalted character, that he would leave that pleasing office to men of elevated genius and eloquence, and content himself with cherishing in his own heart the remembrance of such uncommon worth and excellence.

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* began with declaring, that he could not avoid offering himself to the Speaker's eye, at that early period of the debate, wishing, as soon as possible, to reply to the Right Honourable Gentleman opposite to him, with whom upon his general principles and ideas of Persecution and Toleration contrasted, he, and every other, must fully agree ; but with whom he disagreed in the extent, to which he conceived, if he rightly understood the Hon. Gentleman, he seemed inclined to push those principles. He said, he meant that day to state his objections to the motion then before the House as distinctly and explicitly as he had twice before stated them ; and he would also assure the House, what were the opinions which he now entertained, that served to strengthen and confirm him in his former opinion on the question. He felt himself, and considered the House to be likewise under very great obligations to the Right Hon. Gentleman for his having cleared away the mystery in which the object of the Dissenters had been enveloped ; he had fairly and openly exhibited to the House the full extent to which the Motion was meant to be carried, and

made it evident that the point at issue between them, simply and plainly was, whether the House should or should not, at once relinquish those Acts which had, by the wisdom of our ancestors, served as a bulwark to the Church, the Constitution of which was so connected and interwoven with the interests and preservation of the Constitution of the State, that the former could not be endangered without hazarding the safety of the latter.

He had heard with approbation the Right Hon. Gentleman's general arguments against Persecution, and in favour of Toleration, but he was surprised at the latitude of definition to which he had seemed inclined to carry Toleration; an extent of definition which it would not bear, and which he was convinced had never before been given it from the beginning of the world. Toleration by no means could be considered as equality; it differed from persecution, and it differed from an establishment: to avoid and abstain no man could be more ready to consent, and he was equally willing to grant every protection of the laws in support of the religion and property of individuals; but the necessity of a certain, permanent, and specifick Church Establishment, rendered it essential, that Toleration should not go to an equality which would endanger the establishment, and thence no longer be Toleration. The extent of the Right Hon. Gentleman's principles, he said, went to the admittance of every class of Dissenters to a full and complete equality, and even to the admittance of those who might conscientiously think it their duty to subvert the Established Church. The Right Hon. Gentleman's principles went not only to the admittance of Roman Catholicks, but Papists, properly so called; (and he observed there was now a material distinction between the two) the latter acknowledging the supremacy of a foreign, though an ecclesiastical Prince, who, according to the Right Hon. Gentleman, with all the odious, detestable, and dangerous opinions that belonged to his church, ought not to be kept out of the most important and official situations, before the Commission of some Overt Act against the Constitution, manifested by force of arms in the open field, by which the policy of *prevention* would be done away, and a dangerous door opened to the absolute ruin of the Constitution.

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The Test and Corporation Acts, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, had been wisely adopted to secure the Constitution, and had it not been for them, the family of Stuart might have been at this day in possession of the Throne, and the Right Hon. Gentleman not have had an opportunity to state those opinions in the House, which the House had that day heard. The Right Hon. Gentleman, he said, was mistaken in his assertion, that no religious Test was taken by Members of the Legislature. Every Gentleman present had taken a religious Test by making a solemn appeal to Providence, when he took the oath against Transubstantiation; which was purely religious; and the Oaths of Allegiance and Abjuration were partly civil and partly religious. He urged the propriety and advantage of these Tests, and contended that all Governments adopted a Test of some kind or other, but that in a country like this, where the Monarchy was limited, it was particularly necessary that the Executive Power should be admitted to exercise a right of discrimination into the fitness of individuals to fill those stations for which the Executive Power was responsible: the necessity of public offices for the benefit of the public at large justified a distinction in the distribution for the same reason, namely, the benefit of the public; the idea of a right in any then to fill those offices, was ridiculous, no such thing could exist, nor could it be so parliamenterially argued by any man, unless that man was ready to contend, that offices were created for the benefit of the holders, and not as a trust for the public; and also to contend that the money paid those who held them, was rather to be raised by way of lottery, than paid out of the public revenue. In our mixed constitution the appointment of offices necessarily and naturally rested with the Executive Power, over which the Legislature had made a wise application of limited monarchy, by a restriction on the Monarch in the disposal of those offices.

Mr. Pitt here put the case of a small Republick, where if a certain description of persons, holding religious tenets fundamentally dangerous to the constitution of the Republick, were admitted to offices of trust, the constitution of that Republick must necessarily be undermined, if no check of some nature or other were applied. The Right Honourable Gentleman entered into a comparison

parison of the qualifications necessary for the electors and elected, and those which were deemed necessary to qualify persons for offices. He considered the Test as a sort of jealousy of the Monarch, which was never considered as unconstitutional; the persons kept out of office by that Test were not in any sort stigmatized, nor had they a juster right of complaint than those who were kept out of that House, or from voting at elections, in consequence of their being by statute disqualified from the right of an elector. In private life, it was a common policy for no man to admit another to the management of his affairs, if he did not think well of that man's principles; the same policy kept good in States; it was therefore no usurpation in the Government, if not approving of the political opinions of the Dissenters, they excluded them from office.

He agreed with the Right Hon. Gentleman, that the merits or demerits of individuals were not to be considered in the discussion of the present question; he could not avoid, however, remarking a little on the conduct of the Dissenters, who at the moment they were reprobating a Test, had pretty publicly indicated an intention of forming associations throughout the whole country for the purpose of putting the Members of that House to a Test, and of resolving to judge of their fitness to fill their seats by their votes on this single question. They had explained themselves since indeed, and declared, that they never meant to put a Test to any one; in the explanation, however, it appeared that they had retained the substance, though they had done away the word; for in the Resolutions of their meeting, signed by Mr. Jefferies, it was declared that they meant to give their support to such Members who proved themselves to be friends to religious and civil liberty, the true meaning of which general terms must strike every man. It was evident the Dissenters would not consider any one a friend to Religious and Civil Liberty, who did not vote for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts: In his opinion, therefore, they came with an ill grace to solicit the Repeal of a Test, when at the same moment they threatened the House with one.

The Question of Right in the Dissenters to fill offices, he conceived he had entirely done away; that being the case, it had to

rest upon its only true grounds, its expediency and policy ; and to decide on this Question, he would divide it into four parts, and ask, 1st, Whether an Establishment was not necessary, and materially connected with the State? 2dly, Whether the Dissenters are not likely to exercise power if they were in possession of it? 3dly, Whether the Repeal of the Acts would not give them that power? and, 4thly, Whether any and what practical inconveniences the Dissenters laboured under by the Test and Corporation Acts, and whether those Acts could be repealed with safety to the Established Church?

It was not, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, necessary for him to trouble the House with an argument to prove, that there ought to be an Established Church, as that was admitted on all sides the House, and even the Right Hon. Gentleman had almost said, in express terms, that it was *necessary*, but, on recollecting himself, had declared an Established Church to be highly useful and advantageous ; nor need he, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, enter into a panegyric on the Established Church, as that had also been done so ably, in a few words, by the Right Hon. Gentleman, who had justly observed that it was equally devoid of all unnecessary exterior ceremony, and had nothing of superfluous enthusiasm or superstition in its interior rites. He need not, he said, trouble the House to prove that the Dissenters would exercise power if put in possession of it, since the possession of power always produced the inclination to exercise it ; and, without meaning to throw any stigma on the Dissenters, he could not hesitate a moment in supposing it probable that they might feel inclined to exercise their power to the subversion of the Established Church ; it would be so far from reprehensible in them, that, possessing the principles they profess, and acting conscientiously upon those principles, it would become their duty, as honest men, to make the endeavour ; for those who considered the Establishment to be “ sinful, and bordering on idolatry,” would not act conscientiously nor consistently, unless they exercised all the legal means in their power to do away that idolatry. He would not, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, enter into the letters of Bishops, or the sermons of Dissenting Ministers, but he fully agreed with the Right Hon. Gentleman, that

that it was their duty to confine themselves to good order, to the inculcation of virtuous principles, and that their only competition ought to be, a competition of who should lead the most exemplary lives, and evince the greatest purity of precepts; in fact, who should, by their preaching and their practice, conduce most to further the purposes of truth, piety, virtue, and morality. The Church, he said, ought to render services to the State, by meliorating the morals of the people; it was calculated so to do, by the form of its constitution, which was most congenial to the civil constitution of the country, and agreeable to its mixed monarchy, the balance of which would be deranged, were any of its parts lessened or encreased in power. The security for the safety of the Church was, he observed, in existence before the Revolution, at which time it was stated to have commenced by the Right Hon. Gentleman; but had it not been for those guards existing before the Revolution, the Revolution would probably have been stifled in its birth.

He did not think, he said, with the Right Hon. Gentleman, that were Dissenters successful in this application, they would be desirous of proceeding no further; for those of that body who stood foremost in this application, and whose names were most frequently mentioned, did, by their declarations, absolutely contradict the promise of the Right Hon. Gentleman, some among them having openly declared their disaffection to the Constitution of the Church. There was sufficient ground, then, for alarm from such declarations, and it was the duty of the House to stand against the danger; in so doing, however, he would not refuse the Dissenters any right that belonged to them, nor refuse them any harmless regulation they might request, or any regulation which clearly led not to dangerous consequences. The simple question then before the House he conceived to be, Whether an Establishment was or was not necessary? The House would not hesitate to declare in the affirmative, nor would they hesitate a moment in agreeing, that to maintain such an Establishment, certain dues were to be collected: if, however, the House should agree to the present relief solicited by the Dissenters, the next application would be to have an exclusion from Church Dues, to which every single argument

offered in support of the present Question, would equally well apply.

When the Dissenters about fourteen years back obtained what, if he understood the Right Hon. Gentleman correctly, he considered to be a completion of that toleration which the Right Hon. Gentleman held not to have been completed before, it was declared both in and out of that House, that they meant to proceed no further, and Dr. Kippis, in his letter at the time upon the subject, said, that Dissenters required only a toleration in the respect in question, and that granted, they would ask no more of the Legislature, but would retire to their closets and their books. Doctor Kippis, it was to be recollected, was a man of no inconsiderable rank and esteem among the Dissenters. This, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, he considered a good argument to press upon the House, to shew them, that by the professions of the Dissenters, it was not to be judged with what they would be contented, or how far they might wish to proceed. The Repeal of the Test Act in Ireland was not in point to the present Question, since having been repealed only five years since, it had not been repealed long enough to judge of its effects by experience; nor was the Church of Ireland in the same situation as the Church of England, for though the number of its followers was comparatively small to the people of the country, it had a security in the number of Catholics, being as six to one over the Dissenters: nor was the Right Hon. Gentleman's observations on the Kirk of Scotland to the point; in the first point, the Test would there be but a very feeble barrier, as the majority of the Dissenters from the Kirk, conformed to their mode of receiving the Sacrament; and in the second point it was safe, the Kirk of Scotland being secured by a solemn pledge in the Act of Union to maintain the Presbytery. The Right Hon. Gentleman's allusion to the Church of France before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantz, was equally out of point, no Test was there necessary, for had the times been less bigotted than they were at that period, the Church would have been safe, as the will of the Sovereign was the law.

With respect to America, to which the Right Honourable Gentleman had alluded, the opinions of other men were now pretty general,

general, however much they had been divided during the war; one party contending at that time that the revolting provinces ought to be coerced to obedience, while another as strongly insisted that they ought to be left to themselves, the world, at the same time, condemning both, the general opinion being, that England could not exist without her Colonies. The event, however, happily proved the contrary to be the fact; in the loss of the territory of the Thirteen American Colonies this country had lost but little of her commerce, though she had to boast of having lost the expence of preserving the civil constitution of those States. Separated as they now were from this country, he should rejoice if their constitution resembled ours, and gave equal security to the subject for liberty and for happiness. Their constitution, however, was not the same, either in Church or State. The Right Hon. Gentleman's argument therefore, that no Test existed in that country, was equally distant from the point with the others that he had relied on; America having no uniform or Established Church, it was clear that she needed no Test to defend one.

The Right Hon. Gentleman had declared that the Test Laws were inefficacious, as the Legislature, he observed, were obliged every session to pass an Indemnity Act. If the fact had been so, nothing could be more obvious than that the ground of all complaint of oppression ceased, for, according to the Right Hon. Gentleman's own shewing, the Law was not enforced; but though the fact was that the Law was not always rigidly enforced, the temperate forbearance of Government ought not to be taken an unjust advantage of, nor ought the Law to be repealed, its general object being meant for the security of the permanent safety of the Church, and to prevent it from being endangered; when the case did not appear pressing, or the danger imminent, it was not necessary to put those Laws in force to the injury of a few individuals; the impolicy, however, of suffering the remedy to such danger as might happen, to lapse and depart from the hand of Parliament, would be gross in the extreme, for should the Laws be once repealed, it might be impossible, when the danger was imminent and pressing, to get these salutary Laws re-enacted.

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The Chancellor of the Exchequer summed up a very long and most able speech, with declaring, that the repeal appeared to him to be dangerous in every point of view to the Church as now established, and to the constitution, and safety of the country. He then briefly adverted to the heads of the arguments he had offered to the House, and concluded with declaring himself from conviction, and on true constitutional principles, against the Motion; at the same time deprecating the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, as a measure that would tend to originate and encourage a dangerous competition, and most probably occasion the revival of all the mischiefs uniformly attending upon religious party contentions.

Mr. *Beaufoy* began by observing, that before he proceeded to reply to the argument of the Right Hon. Gentleman, he could not but remark, and in remarking he could not but exceedingly lament the manner in which, not from a harshness of feeling towards the Dissenters (for he was no stranger to the natural benignity of the Right Hon. Gentleman's disposition) but from the nature of the cause, which he had undertaken to defend, he had commented on the present application of his fellow subjects. Is it not sufficient, said Mr. *Beaufoy*, that the Dissenters are excluded from all the offices and honours of the State; that they, whose attachment to the House of Brunswick has not always been equalled, and has never been exceeded, should be excluded from the service of their gracious master? Is it not sufficient that they should be denied the common privilege of bearing arms, as if, like slaves, they had no property to protect, no rights to maintain, no country to defend? Is it not sufficient that they should be involved in the same penalties with which the vengeance of the law pursues the most inveterate and atrocious offenders, but they must also be charged with cherishing designs which their conduct had disproved as constantly as their language had disclaimed, and which their principles, as far as I have ever known them, have no tendency to produce? If they were really men of the factious disposition which the Right Hon. Gentleman has described, would they in all times of national weakness and of publick distress (the times at which the voice of faction is ever the loudest) have borne
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their sufferings with such constant, uniform, persevering patience, never troubling you at such seasons with solicitation or complaint? The example of Ireland had taught them that the hour of national distress is also that of national justice; but far from availing themselves of the knowledge which that example conveyed, they have always, in these unhappy moments of embarrassment, preferred a continuance of suffering to every hope of relief. It was not till all difficulties were removed, and all anxieties were fled; it was not till after the return of the general strength had given security to all rights but theirs, that they intreated your attention to the hardship they endured from the Sacramental Laws. After the continuance of such a conduct for more than 120 years, they did venture to hope (nor can that hope be considered as presumptuous) that they were entitled not only to the justice, which however is all they ask, but also to the partial attachment, and affectionate regard of the Legislature. Nor can I persuade myself, notwithstanding the censures of the Right Hon. Gentleman (censures strongly implied, rather than directly expressed) that the House of Commons will hear with indignation, that which before a still greater tribunal, is always heard with indulgence, a repetition of earnest intreaties from those who are struggling with oppression.

The arguments of the Right Hon. Gentleman, naturally arrange themselves under two distinct heads, that of the conduct of the Dissenters, and that of the merits of the Question considered in the abstract. On the first of these points he charges them with inconsistency of conduct, in endeavouring to impose a Test upon others at the very time that they bitterly complain of the hardship resulting from the existence of a Test on themselves. Inconsistency of conduct! Have the Dissenters ever denied the propriety of Civil Tests for civil purposes? Have they ever disputed, under proper regulations, the expedience and wisdom of oaths? Have they ever declared, that such persons as are candidates for civil offices should not be called upon to give a pledge of faithful allegiance and firm attachment to the state? The folly and injustice of religious tests for civil offices, they have, indeed, invariably reprobated; for they have ever asserted, that no power on earth has a right to impose on any man a declaration of religious belief, as the

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condition on which alone he should be called to the possession of a political employment; and consistently with these declarations, they have sometimes urged, to those who are candidates for their favour, that he who wishes to be appointed the guardians of others, ought at least to be willing to acknowledge the existence of those rights; but never, on any occasion, have they examined the person who solicited their votes to represent them in Parliament, on the abstract points of his religious belief, or the principles of his speculative Creed. The propriety, the expedience, the wisdom of such distinction, between civil tests for civil purposes, and religious tests for the same purposes, are sufficiently obvious, but the inconsistency which that distinction is supposed to imply, I own myself at a loss to discern.

Still, however, the Right Honourable Gentleman states, that the conduct of the Dissenters towards the candidates for their favour is unconstitutional and unfair. Is it unconstitutional and unfair that the Dissenters should say to the candidate for his favour, "you desire me to appoint you the guardian of all that is dear to an Englishman, the laws and constitution of his country, as well as his property and freedom; but before I consent to raise you to so important a station, permit me to ask, for it much concerns me to know, are you yourself a friend to the rights of the subject; do you wish well to the cause of the injured, or are you disposed to uphold the course of oppression? You cannot be a stranger to the hardships to which I am exposed by the Sacramental Laws, nor can you want information on a subject which has been agitated in Parliament, and canvassed by every person in the kingdom. If then, you are not inclined to grant me that relief, which on every principle of justice, and of the faith of Parliament, virtually, but strongly pledged, I am entitled to receive, on what principle, or on what pretext, can you expect my support? You refuse me the common privileges of a Citizen, and, in return, shall I raise you to the rank of a Legislator? You wish the continuance of laws that expose me to the same punishment which is inflicted on those who have proved themselves faithless to man, and perjured to Heaven; and in return for such indignities, shall I invest you with eminence and honour?"

honour?" The policy, the wisdom of such language, in persons who constitute but a small part of the community, may perhaps be questioned, but surely in that language, there is nothing that can be deemed unconstitutional or unfair.

In the next place, the Right Hon. Gentleman states, that the Dissenters are justly chargeable with a breach of public faith, in claiming indulgencies from Parliament, after they had solemnly declared that, if the relief which a few years back was asked by their Ministers were given, they should have nothing further to solicit from the legislature of their country: and in speaking on this subject, while he has expressed himself towards Dr. Kippis with that justice which is obviously due to the eminence of his character, in the sacred profession to which he belongs, as well as to his distinguished name in the literary world, he has taxed him as the person to whom this charge of inconsistency between conduct and assurances, specifically and solemnly given, particularly applies; but the Right Hon. Gentleman has too much candour to have hazarded such a charge, if he had not confounded two claims which are perfectly unconnected. That of the Ministers, who petitioned for, and obtained legislative relief; and that of the laity, who were as little concerned in that relief as the Ministers now are in the specific indulgence, if such it must be called, to which the present application relates. The Ministers with perfect good faith assured the Legislature, that they, as Ministers, had no additional claim to urge, or further relief to solicit, and from this claim they have never departed; for to them no emolument can arise, no advantage civil or religious can be gained from the Repeal which a different description of men, the Laity, now earnestly request from the hardships of the Sacramental Laws.

The last circumstance on which the Right Hon. Gentleman has founded his objections to the conduct of the Dissenters, consists in the formation of their Provincial Assemblies, and of that General Meeting which has been lately announced in London. I am happy that on this part of the subject I can appeal to the best of proofs, the experience of past times, for the perfect consistency of that meeting, with every consideration of general tranquillity, and of national interest: for, in the year 1733, on precisely the same

grounds as at present, those of wishing to convince the Legislature how sensibly affected all denominations of the Dissenters were with the penalties imposed upon them by the Sacramental Laws, the Deputies of the London Congregations requested that Delegates to a National Meeting might be sent from all the principal towns of the kingdom. On that occasion the same clamour, as at present arose, the same suggestions were employed, the same dark insinuations were urged, and the voice of calumny was still loud when the sudden news of a rebellion in the North burst on the public ear. Consternation was in every eye, the sound of despair was heard in every street. At that fearful crisis what was the conduct of the Protestant Dissenters? At the very time that many of their calumniators were negotiating with the public enemy, and others were hastening to his camp, the Dissenters rose as one man in defence of the life and throne of their Sovereign. This was their reply to the accusations which assailed their fame. By the memory of those brave men who on that occasion equally despised the sword of the enemy and the vengeance of the Sacramental Laws; by the blood of those martyrs to their attachment to the House of Brunswick, who perished in the field of Culloden; let me conjure you to banish from your thoughts, those unworthy suspicions of your countrymen, with which their defamers have endeavoured to taint your minds!

From this review of the several charges on the conduct of the Dissenters, Mr. Beaufoy next proceeded to the arguments by which Mr. Pitt had combated the rights which they claimed, to be deemed capable in law of enjoying those offices of honour and trust, to which the partiality of their Sovereign might call them. He observed, that there were two grounds on which the right of the Dissenters to that capacity had been combated. The first was, that a majority of the inhabitants of the kingdom have a right to exclude from all the employments of the State, such persons as differ from themselves in the abstract points of religious belief: the other was derived from a consideration of the objects and purposes of Government. On the first of these grounds, Mr. Beaufoy said, that the argument had not been, and in his opinion could not be strongly urged; for, exclusive of every abstract consideration,

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it was perfectly clear, that such reasoning, however applicable in England to the actual situation of affairs, or convenient in itself for the purposes of the present discussion, was too inconsistent with the conduct of the British Government in another part of the empire, to be deemed salutary in practice, or wise in theory. He wished not, however, to dwell on this division of the subject, or to shew that such reasoning must prove that the principles maintained in the British Parliament must disprove the justice of that Government which has long been established in Ireland, and which certainly is not founded on the idea that a majority of the inhabitants have a right to exclude their fellow-citizens from all offices of emolument, honour, and trust. In arguing on the nature and ends of Government, Mr. Beaufoy observed, that the right of the Dissenters to be deemed capable in law of holding such offices, civil or military, as they might be called upon to fill by the voice of their Sovereign, rested on the best and broadest of all foundations, that on which Government itself is built.

To prove this point, he said, he need not have recourse to solemn deductions and formal inferences, or remind the House of what they so perfectly knew, that besides the right which nature has given to every man to his property, his freedom, and his life, she has also conferred on him a fourth right, that of defending the former three, and that Government is nothing more than a systematic mode of carrying these four rights into convenient and complete effect. As little need he observe, that though upon this principle every man may seem to have naturally an equal claim with every other man to be deemed capable in law of taking his part in that system of defence, yet, as it was perfectly obvious that every man could not be called to an actual exertion of such a right, there must be somewhere a power of selection; which power the people of England, with evident wisdom, had vested in the same hands to which they have entrusted the supreme executive power of the State.

The only point, he observed, for consideration, was, what are the conditions that constitute this rule of selection? That on the one hand the Dissenters contended that, as the rule of admission was directed to the attainment of civil objects, it ought to be founded on

civil principles alone, whereas the Right Hon. Gentleman had contended it ought to be founded on religious principles also. The Dissenters conceived that no conditions should be necessary to constitute legal capacity for office, but the choice of the Sovereign in the first place, and in the second, an ability and willingness to give with effect, an assurance of civil attachment to the State; a bond of firm and faithful allegiance. On these principles it was evident, that two descriptions of men would be excluded—first, all those who have been convicted of perjury, and had consequently shewn, that on their minds the most binding of all bonds is incapable of producing its natural effect:—secondly, all such persons, if any such there be, as under the denomination of Papists (a term which the Right Hon. Gentleman, with a clearness of distinction that I trust will always be remembered, has justly distinguished from the Catholics) are understood to believe that oaths to an heretical Government are not binding on the swearer. But the Right Hon. Gentleman, not satisfied with these conditions, contends, that, though the subject be able to give with effect, and may have actually given the strongest possible pledge of attachment to the State, yet that the legislature, on account of the abstract opinions of his religious belief, has a right to exclude him from the honours and emoluments of all public employments, civil and military, and has also a right to consign him to degradation and dishonour, and to impose on him, though guiltless of offence, punishment that can never be warranted, except by atrocious crimes.

Consistently with this opinion, the Right Hon. Gentleman has also alledged, or rather has taken it for granted in his reasoning, that the Government of a country has a right to impose on the Dissenters whatever restraints, and whatever penalties it shall deem expedient for the security of the established church; but terrible indeed, if this principle should be established, must be the situation of the Dissenters. For what is it but to say, that not by their own actions, but by other men's fears, shall the measures of their penalties be determined. Try them by their actions, and it will be found, that they are entitled to the strongest affection of their country, and to the attachment and gratitude of the Church; for more than once, in times of difficulty and distress, they have saved her

from impending destruction, and at this very hour it is generally understood that the Church of Ireland is upheld by their zealous attention to her interests; but if the extent of their sufferings is in future to be determined, not by their own conduct, but by the apprehensions of others, a situation of greater humiliation and of deeper distress can scarcely be conceived; for they cannot conceal from themselves that though the fears of the present hour may be satisfied with the penalties of the present Law, yet that the fears of the succeeding hour may suggest, that they who are unfit to be trusted with the subordinate offices of the State, ought not to be invested with the most important of all offices, that of legislative authority. Thus the Dissenters may be hereafter excluded from the right of sitting in Parliament. As little can they conceal from themselves that a still stronger apprehension may intimidate, that he who is unfit to be intrusted with an Exciseman's office, must be ill-qualified to choose the Guardians of whatever is most sacred in the laws and Constitution of the country. Thus the Dissenters may be excluded from the right of voting at elections. Fear is generally progressive, and, on some future occasions, may possibly suggest, that they who cannot with prudence be allowed the management of their commercial concerns, lest they should give them too much influence in the State, ought not to be indulged the greater influence which the possession of landed property bestows. Thus the Dissenters may be excluded from the right of purchasing or succeeding to estates in land. Others again, of greater timidity, perhaps, or who value themselves more on consistency of character may suggest that, if the Dissenters are such enemies to the Church, as to render their exclusion a wise and salutary precaution, if they really are such stedfast inveterate foes to the established religion, that to intrust them with arms, is to hazard her safety, they ought not, in common prudence, to be permitted, for a moment, to continue in the realm. Thus the banishment of the Dissenters may be deemed a necessary matter.

Mr. Beaufoy said, he was unwilling to pursue this train of reasoning any further, lest he should seem to describe, as the possible language of his countrymen, that which he only meant to state as the natural language of the principle which the Right Hon. Gentleman, without adverting to its consequences, had endeavoured

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to inculcate; yet if the conclusions which obviously result from the principle, be those alone which in argument he was bound to discuss, he thought himself obliged to state, that under the influence of that principle, there might hereafter be persons who may be induced to urge, that though the disburdening the Church of her foes be a wise and salutary measure, yet that the prudence of permitting the escape of an enemy, irritated, but not weakened, exasperated, but not subdued, may well be disputed; that the same consideration that would justify the banishment of the Dissenters, would equally justify a more effectual expedient, and that if the memory of Charles the Ninth, and of the Festival of St. Bartholomew, must be reprobated, it should rather be for the laxness of the execution, than for the folly of the design. He once more declared his perfect persuasion that such sentiments could never again be avowed or entertained in Britain. Yet, said he, I cannot but reflect that two hundred years have scarcely elapsed since (even in this kingdom) the sun was darkened by the smoke of those fires which consumed, in torment, the individuals who at that time dissented from the established church. Are then the Dissenters mistaken when they conceive that the principle which is thus inculcated, opens an immeasurable gulf, in which their rights of property, of freedom, and of life, may all be lost? If they are mistaken, let proofs of that mistake be given; let it be shown that the principle in question will justify the exclusion of the Dissenters from all the subordinate offices of the State, in which their enmity to the Church, if it really existed, must be abortive, but will not justify their exclusion from legislative power, by the possession of which the consequence of a hostile disposition might indeed be dangerous: let it be shewn that the principle will justify the taking from them the right of defending their liberty and their existence, but will not justify the depriving them of their lives or freedom, In other words, that it will warrant all such measures as must be inefficacious, but will not warrant such as might, perhaps, be effectual.

I should be glad to see this distinction established, as the apprehensions of the Dissenters would be greatly diminished, if they were satisfied that there is a boundary which persecution on that principle

principle can never pass. Vain, however, is the wish; fruitless the hope; for what limits can be assigned to the operation of a principle, the very existence of which is an outrage to justice, and a proof of the weakness of her laws? Shall we appeal to the objects of Government for the extent to which penalties on religious belief may be carried? Alas, Sir, the very existence of this object is endangered from the moment that such penalties are permitted at all. Government was established for the protection of the rights of property, of freedom, and of life; but if the legislature has a right to judge of the tendencies of thoughts abstractedly from conduct, and to establish a standard of human guilt independently of human actions, that protection is at once annihilated: for it is obvious, that if the legislature has a right to judge of the mere operations of the mind, it has the means of consigning to condemnation whatever religious opinions they please, and therefore of marking for destruction, whatever religious Sects they pleased. It is a privilege that destroys the firmest bond, and strongest principle of union, that is known to civil society—the assurance that the guiltless shall not be condemned—that the innocent shall not be punished. It takes away from the subject that blessing of security, without which, all other blessings are but motives to disquietude, and incitement to distress.

The Right Hon. Gentleman's next declaration was, that the Dissenters already enjoy a sufficient and complete Toleration. Sir, it is the severest affliction, of which the Dissenters complain, that while, in order to enjoy that right of private belief, which is essential to thought, and therefore inseparable from existence, they are reduced to a situation which the House of Peers (so much did they differ from the Right Hon. Gentleman) have solemnly pronounced to be one of the most unhappy to which Englishmen can be reduced, they are considered by their fellow-subjects, as enjoying a sufficient and ample toleration. "You ask from the Legislature the free exercise of private judgment in questions of religion. You claim the right of acceding to those laws, by which the Almighty governs conviction,—a right which, if it were in your inclination, it is not in your power to resign; yet that very right you shall enjoy on no other condition than that of being
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“ excluded from all the offices and honours of the state, of being
 “ denied the common privilege of bearing arms, and of being
 “ involved in penalties which the House of Peers, the most solemn
 “ tribunal now existing on earth, have declared never, except for
 “ offences the most enormous, ought to be inflicted. Yet this
 “ Toleration shall be held to be sufficient and compleat. Have
 “ your fellow-citizens raised you to the seat of Magistracy as a
 “ man whose integrity and talents invite the confidence of the
 “ innocent, and appal the hopes of the guilty? Have they en-
 “ trusted you with the management of their affairs, as a person
 “ whose probity they have often tried, and whose judgment they
 “ have repeatedly proved? That Toleration which is granted, shall
 “ depose you from your office as a man unworthy of all trust; for
 “ whose conduct the strongest oaths are a weak and insufficient
 “ security. Yet your fellow-citizens shall exult in the liberality
 “ of the indulgence which they have extended to your character
 “ and religious opinions. The very privileges which you derive
 “ from your benevolence to the poor, this complete and sufficient
 “ Toleration shall wrest from your hands. Have you endowed an
 “ hospital, and obtained a charter for its establishment? all share
 “ in the management of its funds which you yourself have
 “ created, all means of conducting to its appropriated ends the
 “ money which yourself have given, shall be taken entirely away.
 “ You shall not be governor of your own charity, nor a director
 “ of your own institution; yet the Toleration which deprives you
 “ of all these rights shall be deemed sufficient and complete.”

Mr. Beaufoy observed, that he was perfectly aware, that the
 Right Honourable Gentleman had endeavoured to shew, that the
 exclusion of unqualified persons to vote at elections, might, with
 as much reason, be considered as a penalty, as the exclusion
 of the Dissenters from the various capacities which their fellow-
 citizens enjoy. But to this he replied, that a disqualification to
 vote at elections, where the legal requisite is wanting, has never
 yet been employed as a common penalty for offences; whereas
 the disabilities imposed upon the Dissenters are penalties, familiar
 to the law, and expressly enjoined by the Legislature, as a punish-
 ment of crimes, the most abhorrent to the peace and well being

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of social life. He said, he was also aware that the Right Honourable Gentleman had stated, that the Dissenters themselves did not consider the existence of the sacramental laws, as being in any considerable degree a practical grievance; an opinion that could only be founded on his not having distinguished between the interest of the Dissenters as composing a religious sect—(an interest they well knew must flourish in proportion as their prosecution was severe) and the feelings of the same Dissenters, as Englishmen; dishonoured in the eyes of their countrymen, degraded in their privileges as citizens, and deprived of their rights as men.—Feelings which had often led them to complain, in the emphatic language of the House of Peers, “that to a more miserable situation than that in which they are placed, is scarcely possible for an Englishman to be reduced.”

The Right Honourable Gentleman had remarked, that weak, defenceless, and unhappy, would be the situation of the Church, if the sacramental laws should be repealed; but much more unhappy, said Mr. Beaufoy, in my opinion, will continue to be her situation, if these laws should be permitted to remain in force; for while she is made the instrument of imposing penalties on the guiltless, of excluding from the service of their Sovereign a large proportion of the most faithful and affectionate of his subjects, and of reducing to the harsh alternative of apostasy from religion (for so if the laws were executed it must actually prove) or of exclusion from all offices and honour, one of the two nations which compose Great Britain, she is at the same time reduced to the shame of prostituting, for these honourable purposes, the most sacred ordinance of her faith; an ordinance of more than mortal institution; the solemn pledge of her eternal hope; and she is likewise exposed to the disgrace of seeing her Ministers compelled to the fearful alternative of trespassing on the laws, or of trampling on their duty, of exposing themselves to prosecution, to penalties, and finally, perhaps, to a prison; or of administering the awful Sacrament to those on whom they are assured of a sentence of everlasting misery.

The history of nations furnishes no example of indignity like this, being offered by any Legislature to the religion of a people.

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That foreign invaders should pollute the temple of a worship, which they do not believe in, may perhaps be natural; yet even this is always recorded with horror; but that the Legislature of a country should deliberately, and by express enactment, prostitute the sacred right, and solemn ordinances of their own faith; that *they* should dispoil the Temple of its customary reverence, and convert it into an anti-chamber to the Excise Office; that they should strip the altar of its purity, and make it a qualification-desk for Tax-gatherers and Public Extortioners; and that the interest of the Church should be pleaded as a reason for this impious defilement, contains in it such a novelty of horror, such stupendous profanation, as never in any other instance has stained the annals of mankind. What, upon such a conduct, must be the impartial decision of succeeding times? There are persons in this assembly, nor is their number small, whose names cannot perish with the age which gave them birth; to them, at least, it is of moment to consider what will be the judgment of that tribunal of posterity, whose final decision no passion can disturb, no fears can terrify, no hopes can seduce. To their unerring wisdom shall we plead that the Sacramental Laws are essential to the support of an established Church? The experience of Ireland falsifies that plea; or shall we say, that, in common policy, a religious Test is essential to the maintenance of civil institution? The experience of all Europe refutes the extravagant assertion: or shall we insult their patience by assuming to ourselves the attributes of Deity, and pretending a right to judge of the guilt or innocence of human thoughts independently of human actions. For the credit of the present age I shall be sorry that such principles shall be recorded, and I know not of any other on which the Sacramental Laws can be defended.

Before I conclude, it gives me much satisfaction to observe, that the Right Hon. Gentleman has neither denied, nor contradicted any one of the facts, on which the claim of the Dissenters to the solicited relief is built. They assert, that their ancestors were not persons against whom the provisions of the Test Act were originally framed, and that they were not included in the reason, though unhappily they were subjected to the burthen of the laws.

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The Right Hon. Gentleman does not pretend, in opposition to the title and preamble of the Act, as well as to all historic records, that the exclusion of Dissenters from all Civil and Military Offices was the purpose for which that Act was designed. The Dissenters also alledge, that the Test Act was passed under an implied but strong and equitable pledge, that relief from its restrictions should be given to the Dissenters. A pledge which the Parliament who passed that Act, though their efforts were defeated by the Act of the Court, repeatedly endeavoured to redeem. This fact also the Right Hon. Gentleman does not attempt to dispute. The Dissenters further maintain, that the Corporation Act was passed in a season of turbulence and national distress: that its provisions were not more hostile to the Dissenters than to the Constitution itself, and that the reasons on which the Act was founded have long since ceased to operate. This fact also the Right Hon. Gentleman has not attempted to disprove.

Thus, Sir, I have endeavoured to shew, that the facts on which the Dissenters have built their claim are unrefuted and unquestioned, and that the arguments which they have advanced, are opposed on such principles alone, as would justify, and have often produced the worst extreme of persecution. In all that I have said, I have submitted to the judgment of the House those considerations alone which have governed my own conviction; for as a friend to justice, I wish relief to the injured; as a citizen devoted to the State, I am anxious to unite in the general defence of all those who are willing to hazard their lives for the general safety; and as a member of the Church of England, I am solicitous to relieve her from reproach, perfectly convinced that she must be weakened in proportion as she is dishonoured, and that her permanent prosperity can never be derived from power founded on oppression.

Mr. *Peruys* said, he had in the two last Sessions left the House without voting at all, when the question for a Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts had been under consideration, because he had not an opportunity of explaining his sentiments respecting the subject; and he regarded it as a question of so important and interesting a nature, that no Member of Parliament ought to give a silent vote upon it; conceiving, however, that at this time it

was the particular wish of the people to know the sentiments of their Representatives on the question, he was desirous of taking up a few minutes of the time of the House, while he stated several observations, which he believed would neither prove extremely acceptable to those who anxiously supported the question, nor to such Gentlemen who as strenuously resisted it. Mr. Powys after having premised this, said, he was by no means ready to go the length of the Right Hon. Gentleman over against him, in asserting that the Test and Corporation Acts took nothing from the Dissenters, and excluded them from nothing that was important; but he was as little willing to admit the claim of the Dissenters made upon such grounds as it had been rested on that day. The two Acts had been blended together; in his opinion, they would have been well worthy to have been made objects of distinct discussion, because they stood on different grounds. With regard to Toleration, every Gentleman in that House was, he believed, a friend to it; tender consciences ought undoubtedly to be treated with every possible regard and attention; but by religious Toleration, he had ever conceived, was meant the granting a right to every man to profess his religious opinions openly, to worship God in his own way, and to breed up and educate his children in his own faith. That was what Toleration meant as extended to Dissenters in their individual capacity, and he thought they could reasonably expect no more. If Dissenters, however, chose to go out of their individual capacity of private men, and wished to hold offices of trust, in that case the House surely would agree, that the State had a right to impose what qualifications it thought proper on those who were to exercise its offices of emolument and authority.

The Test Act, Mr. Powys observed, was an Act that certainly did contain a variety of pains, penalties, and disabilities, extending to the Dissenters indeed, but professedly aimed rather at the Roman Catholicks. Among other curious disabilities was that of a Roman Catholick being seen in the presence of the King, or at Court; this, as well as several others of an extraordinary nature, was certainly carrying religious prejudices a great way; but in the present case with regard to the Dissenters, the Question he considered as a question of power, agitated upon a *claim* made by the Dissenters; a pretty singular claim! and in that light it ought to

to be viewed. If the Dissenters therefore wished for power, they could not reasonably expect to receive it on terms different from those which other persons, admitted to power, were obliged to undergo. They all well knew, that every Magistrate, of every description, from the lowest to the highest, was obliged, previous to his admission to office, to give a test of his attachment to the establishment in Church and State by taking the Sacrament. The Sovereign on the Throne, who was in fact the first Magistrate in the Country, and the source and fountain of all subordinate place and power, was himself obliged to give the public a test of his future faithful discharge of his duty in his administration of the executive Government of the Country; and could it be maintained by fair argument that the Dissenters had reasonable cause for complaint, when they by the Test and Corporation Acts were put to no greater hardship, than every other person holding an office of trust and power were obliged to submit to?

Mr. Powys took notice of several of Mr. Fox's arguments, and animadverted upon them. With some he concurred—from others he differed—and stated his reasons for it. The Hon. Gentleman, he observed, had laid it down, that the true mode of judging of mens opinions, and the probable danger that might result from them, was not by inferences drawn from their known sentiments, but by their effects and overt acts. To this Mr. Powys declared he could not subscribe, because it went a great deal too far. Did not they all know, that one of the first duties of Government was to prevent dangers to the civil constitution, and not to wait till it broke into act? Upon what other principle did the famous Exclusion Bill rest, than the apprehensions of the Legislature that the Duke of York, from being known to be a Papist, would endeavour to subvert the civil constitution of the country, to which the doctrines of the Popish religion were notoriously inimical. The Duke of York had committed no overt act, and his conduct when James II. proved the prudence and precaution of those who had supported the Bill of Exclusion.

With regard to the principles of Toleration laid down by the Right Hon. Gentleman who made the motion, the Right Hon. Gentleman did not seem to be aware to what an extent they might be pushed; and that it was not the Dissenters alone who would be en-

titled to hold offices of trust and power, if the principles he had laid down and argued from, were to be admitted, but Dissenters of every denomination: the Jew, the Mahometan, the disciples of Brama, Confucius, and of every head of a sectary. [Mr. Fox cried *Hear! hear!*] Mr. Powys observed, that the liberality of the Hon. Gentleman's mind would not permit him to refuse his assent to an observation, which surely proved, that great inconvenience, and some danger to our civil constitution might arise from suffering men of different religious persuasions from the establishment to find their way to places of great trust and importance. Mr. Powys adverted to the State of Representation in Parliament, and said, that from accident and lapse of time, it certainly had become incomplete and irregular: but irregular and incomplete as it might be, when the representation was once collected, and they were met in that House, where they became a branch of the Legislature acting for the good of the whole, the machine rolled on safely, and every end was fully answered; and so it would continue to be, as long as the several branches of the Legislature kept within their proper limits and did not encroach on each other.

Mr. Powys declared himself a warm admirer of the Church Establishment of this Country, and said, that House from its majority being churchmen in the proportion of greatly more than ten to one, was a proof that the people in general were of his opinion with regard to the Established Church; should the majority ever consist of Dissenters, they would undoubtedly obtain an extension of immunities. Mr. Powys added several other very pointed observations addressed to different parts of Mr. Fox's speech, and what had fallen from other Gentlemen in the course of the debate. He concluded with saying, that he thought there ought to be some sort of Test or other for the Dissenters, and therefore as the present Motion, if it passed, would do away all difference between the Dissenters and those of the Established Church, by leaving no Test at all, he should hold himself bound to vote against it.

[While Mr. Powys was upon his legs, a noble Viscount came suddenly into the House, and called out, "Mr. Speaker, I insist on the gallery being cleared;" but as it was extremely full, the House in general called upon Mr. Powys to proceed, and thus were the strangers suffered to remain during the remainder of a most interesting debate.]

Mr.

Mr. *Yorke* stated, that he would not have troubled the House at a time when so many Gentlemen were desirous of delivering their opinions, if he had not felt himself particularly circumstanced with respect to the question. When an Hon. Gentleman proposed in the year 1787 a motion of a similar tendency to that which was actually under the consideration of the House, Mr. *Yorke* said, he thought it a motion which the House might have complied with, provided that the security of the Church were not likely to be impaired by such a compliance, and that the complete and permanent satisfaction of the Protestant Dissenters would be the probable consequence of it. He considered those as objects of great importance to the tranquillity of the country, which it was necessary for the House to attend to at all times, and particularly at the present moment. In voting for the Motion of the Hon. Gentleman, he looked to those objects with some anxiety, and though, upon a full consideration of the circumstances under which the present Motion was introduced, he could not give it the same conscientious support that he had formerly done; yet he considered the satisfaction of the Dissenters so extremely desirable, that if a Repeal of the Test Laws would ensure that object, he should think it a proper concession, if it could be made consistently with the security of the Ecclesiastical and Civil Establishments of the country. But he could not assent to a Motion for a direct and unqualified Repeal, especially as the Right Hon. Gentleman had controverted the propriety of substituting any other security instead of that which he was desirous to remove. The present laws had existed so long, that they might almost be considered as ancient land-marks of the Constitution; they had been frequently so considered in the best of times, as well at the Revolution as after the Accession of the Hanover Family, when the Act against occasional conformity was so properly repealed. The public merits of the Dissenters had been alleged as a reason for repealing these laws. But though the utility of their conduct in many instances must be acknowledged by every one who had ever looked into the history of this country, yet it could hardly be stated that this was of itself a sufficient reason for admitting persons of every description into offices of trust and power, without any attention to their political opinions. An Hon. Gentleman (Mr. *Powys*) had stated, that every regard was due, and every attention ought to be paid to tender consciences. In this idea, Mr. *Yorke* said, he most heartily concurred;

concurred; and he should rejoice to see a proposition for some reform in the articles of faith, and in the formularies of the Liturgy, voluntarily brought forward by those from whom it would come with the greatest propriety. He thought a prudent and well-timed relaxation in those points, would contribute no less to the security of the Church, than it would redound to the honour of those who should promote it.

Mr. *Burke* began a long speech, which proved to be one of the most forcible and impressive that had been delivered in the debates of the three last sessions against the repeal, with declaring the two preceding times the question had been agitated, he had absented himself from the House, not having been able to make up his mind to any decision on the subject, and that even yet he had not been able to satisfy himself altogether, though certainly in a much greater degree than before, when he could not lay hold of any one straight forward principle to guide his judgment by. He was now, however, from information lately received, ready to say, why he could not vote for his Right Hon. Friend's question? In every discussion relative to religion, Mr. *Burke* said, he was sorry to see the appearance of any thing like party-spirit, because he thought such subjects ought not to be mingled or contaminated with party, but to be argued on their own grounds solely; every individual Member, whatever his political sentiments might be, and however they might differ from those of other gentlemen, ought never once to suffer them to prejudice his judgment, nor ought he to allude to them in argument. It had given him concern therefore to observe, that the Right Hon. Gentleman over the way had directed a personal sneer at his Right Hon. Friend, in invidiously putting the case, that if a man of *his* [Mr. *Fox's*] bold and enterprising character was to come into power as a Minister, and countenanced the Dissenters, that they might obtain a footing in places of great trust, and thus become capable of endangering the safety of the civil constitution of the State. The manner in which his Right Hon. Friend had opened and argued the question, and the many very weighty and sound arguments he had brought forward in a manner so open and clear, might, he should have imagined, have rescued his Right Hon. Friend from such a sarcasm; he was, he owned, the more surprised, because there had been a Minister, who had formerly had a seat in that House, who had held publicly in the
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House of Lords, and in the face of the Bishops, a language respecting Churchmen, and the doctrine and ritual of our established religion, ten times more broad and gross than any thing his Right Hon. Friend had said of the High Churchmen in former days. The Minister to whom he had alluded had been a man of brilliant talents and acknowledged abilities; a Minister who had directed the government of this country with great glory to its national character, and great safety to the Constitution both in Church and State. The Minister in question, Mr. Burke said, was the late Earl of Chatham, who in the House of Lords had used these words:

In the Debate occasioned in the House of Lords, by the SECOND application, Dr. Drummond, the Archbishop of York, having called the Dissenting Ministers "men of close ambition," Lord Chatham said, "that this was judging uncharitably, and that whoever brought such a charge against them, without proof, defamed. Here he paused, and then went on—"The Dissenting Ministers are represented as men of close ambition. They are so, my Lords; and their ambition is to keep CLOSE to the College of Fishermen, not of Cardinals; and to the Doctrine of Inspired Apostles, not to the decrees of interested and aspiring Bishops.—They contend for a spiritual creed, and spiritual worship. We have a CALVINISTIC CREED, a POPISH LITURGY, and an ARMINIAN CLERGY.

Thus, he observed, had that noble Lord selected the worst names of other religions, and applied them to our Church and Liturgy. The Earl of Chatham, Mr. Burke said, was ever regarded as the protector of the Dissenters, and yet he had never heard that the safety of the Church had been once thought in danger during his administration. When he died, it was generally conceived, that he had left the protection of the Dissenters, with his mantle, to a noble Earl in the other House. That noble Earl had since been at the head of the Government of this country, and the Rt. Hon. Gent. over the way had been at the same time in Administration, and no complaint had nevertheless been made when that Administration ceased, that the Church had been left less safe by the Noble Earl. An intimate and worthy friend of his, the late Sir George Saville, had also been an avowed friend to the Dissenters, and yet he verily believed, had Sir George Saville ever been First Lord of the Treasury, he would have thought it his duty to protect the established Church, and save it from the least innovation; it was among a Minister's first duties. The Right Honourable Gentleman, therefore, had no ground whatever for imagining or suggesting, that if his Right Hon. Friend

were to be a Minister, that therefore he being avowedly a friend to the Dissenters, the safety of the Church would be endangered. His Right Honourable Friend, Mr. Burke observed, had rejoiced that the lower House of Convocation had not been convened or sat for a long time; but *Lazarus only sleepeth* (said he), he is not dead; was a fact that ought to be remembered. The lower House of Convocation was not out of existence; it lay dormant indeed, and in a state of dormancy, in his mind, it ought always to continue, unless when some great and real question alarming to the safety of the Church rendered its meeting necessary. His Right Honourable Friend, Mr. Burke took notice, had began his speech with laying down the principles of toleration and of persecution; all persecution civil or religious, was odious and horrible. He had ever held it in detestation; but care ought to be taken, that men did not, under colour of an abstract Principle, deceive even themselves. Abstract Principles, Mr. Burke said, his Honourable Friend knew him well enough to know he disliked, and never could bear; he detested them when a boy, and he liked them no better now he had silver hairs. Abstract principles were what his clumsy apprehension could not grasp; he must have a principle embodied in some manner or other, and the conduct held upon it ascertained before he could pretend to judge of its propriety and advantage in practice. But of all abstract principles, abstract principles of natural right (which the Dissenters relied on as their strong-hold) were the most idle, because the most useless and the most dangerous to resort to. They superseded society, and broke asunder all those bonds that had formed the happiness of mankind for ages. He would venture to say, that if they were to go back abstractedly to original rights, there would be an end of all society. Abstract principles of natural right had been long since given up for the advantage of having, what was much better, society, which substituted wisdom and justice in the room of original right. It annihilated all those natural rights, and drew to its mass all the component parts of which these rights were made up. It took in all the virtue of the virtuous, all the wisdom of the wise—It gave life, security, and action to every faculty of the soul, and secured the possession of every comfort which those proud and boasting natural rights impotently held out, but could not ascertain. It gave alms to the indigent, defence to the weak, instruction to the ignorant, employment to the industrious,

industrious, consolation to those who wanted it, nurture to the helpless, support to the aged, faith to the doubtful, hope to those in despair, and charity to all the human race; extending itself from acts of tenderness to the infant when it first cried in the cradle, to acts of comfort and preparation to the dying man on the way to the tomb. After a most sublime climax of description in detailing the advantages attributable to Society, and also deducible from the Church, which he stated as the necessary creature and assistant of Society in all its great and most beneficial purposes, Mr. Burke professed his peculiar regard and reverence for the Established Church of this Kingdom, and the necessity that existed to preserve it safe and entire at a time like the present, when, he contended, there was not merely a false alarm calculated to answer some purpose of mischief and oppression meditated by the Established Church herself, but strong and warrantable grounds of serious apprehension for the Church's safety. In order to establish this position, Mr. Burke reverted to the definition of toleration as laid down by his Right Honourable Friend, and said he did not clearly understand what his Right Honourable Friend meant, but he believed him to concur in opinion with him, that men were not to be judged of merely by their opinions, but by the conduct they held compared with their opinions. His rule ever had been to trace effects to their causes, and thus, by recurring to first principles, judge, as his Right Hon. Friend had well argued it, *a posteriori*, of the facts that followed. It was therefore by the conduct of the Dissenters that he judged of them—by their acts, their declarations, and their avowed intentions. After an infinite deal of argument in illustration of the propriety and safety of resting a judgement with regard to the danger to be dreaded from men from knowledge of their principles, and a comparison between their avowed principles and their acknowledged and undeniable conduct, Mr. Burke said, that he might not be charged with calumniating the Dissenters, whom he had formerly espoused with the utmost zeal (when, with Sir George Saville, he had contended for their cause in respect to the Bill last passed in their favour some fourteen years ago) but whom he now accused with holding conduct, and asserting doctrines that threatened the most imminent danger to the future safety, and even the very being of the Church, he would recur to facts, and produce such proofs of what he asserted, as should put the matter beyond a doubt, and establish to the

the satisfaction of every man who heard him, that he had attended very sufficiently to the broad and clear distinction between the fears of a man alarmed on the reasonable conviction of the approach of real danger, and those kinds of fears which originated in mere cowardice and unmanly weakness, before he admitted the apprehension that filled his mind at present. Mr. Burke, after a definition of the three distinct points of view in which danger from any quarter to the Church was to be considered, viz. as to its nearness, its imminence, and the degree of mischief to be dreaded from it, proceeded to establish facts, as he called them, which would, he said, prove the extent of each of the three divisions into which he had resolved the consideration.

His first great proof was the production of two printed catechisms, circulated by the Dissenters for the use of young non-conformists, written by Mr. Robinson, and Mr. Palmer. The first catechism, he said, contained no one precept of religion. It consisted of one continued invective against Kings and Bishops, in which every thing was misrepresented and placed in the worst light. In short, it was a catechism of misanthropy, a catechism of anarchy, a catechism of confusion! grossly libelling the National Establishment in every part and passage, and these catechisms were to be put into the hands of Dissenters children, who were thus to be taught in their early infancy to hiss out censures and condemnations of the Established Church of England, and to be brought up as a rising generation of its determined enemies, while possibly the dissenting preachers were themselves recommending the same sort of robbery and plunder of the wealth of the Church as had happened in France, where some men were weak enough to imagine a happy revolution had taken place; but where he knew the most miserable system of government at this moment prevailed that ever disgraced the annals of Europe. He dwelt on the destruction of the Establishment of the French Church as a circumstance peculiarly shameful and scandalous; those who had compared *the Church of Rome to the Whore of Babylon, the Kirk of Scotland to a kept Mistress, and the Church of England to something between a Prostitute and a Modest Woman*, would probably, he said, be preaching up the same doctrines to their congregations, while the rising race of Dissenters were probably imbibing those principles so pernicious in themselves, and so dangerous to the safety of the Established

blished Church of this Country; and how could he tell but that it would end in the acting the same shameful scene, respecting the plunder of the wealth and revenues, and the accompanying demolition of our Church, as it had done in the case of the Church of France? Mr. Burke observed, that a hint of the use to which the wealth of our Church might be appropriated, had been given, during the American war, by the Duke of Richmond in the House of Lords; when a Bishop was speaking in favour of that War, the Duke, in reply, mentioned the millions the War had cost the Country, and said, as money must be had, the Country knew to whom they might resort for it. His Grace therefore advised the Bishops to beware what conduct they pursued. Mr. Burke considered this as a suggestion which the Dissenters might, on a new hint, improve on, and thence induce the mob to view the wealth of the Church, as a better object than the bribes of election candidates. After much argument on these points, Mr. Burke produced the books of catechism, of one of which (a political catechism) he read the title with an entry from the general meeting at Harlowe (where all the Dissenters of that division assemble), declaring their approbation of the work, and their resolution to circulate and recommend it in their division. Mr. Burke read also two or three passages pointed directly at the Church Establishment. Having laid great stress on these, he produced a letter which, he declared, had only come to his hands the preceding day, written by Mr. Fletcher, a Dissenter, from a meeting of Dissenting Ministers held at Bolton in Lancashire. Mr. Fletcher stated in his letter, that the meeting avowed such violent principles, that he would not stay, but came away with some other moderate men. It described, that one member, on being asked, What was their object, and whether they meant to seek for any thing more than the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts? answered, in the language of our Saviour, "We know those things which ye are not yet able to bear." And on another member's saying, "give them a little light into what we intend," informed him, that *they did not care the nip of a straw* for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, but that they *designed to try for the abolition of the Tythes and the Liturgy*. Mr. Burke descanted on this for some time; he then mentioned Dr. Priestley's declaration, "that he hated all Religious Establishments, and thought them
sinful

sinful and idolatrous," and produced a letter of Dr. Priestley's (*),

* The following EXTRACTS from a PREFACE to a late PUBLICATION, entitled, "LETTERS to the Rev. EDWARD BURNE, of ST. MARY'S CHAPEL, BIRMINGHAM.

By Dr. PRIESTLEY.

"ON this account I rejoice to see the warmth which the cause of Orthodoxy (that is of long established opinions, however erroneous) and that of the Hierarchy is now taken up by its friends. Because, if their system be not well founded, they are only accelerating its destruction. In fact, they are assisting me in the proper disposal of those grains of gunpowder, which have been some time accumulating, and at which they have taken so great an alarm, and which will certainly blow it up at length; and perhaps as suddenly as unexpectedly, and as completely, as the overthrow of the late arbitrary Government in France. If an inhabitant will not submit to a thorough examination and reasonable repairs of the building he occupies, the consequence must be that, without gunpowder, or even a high wind, it must some time or other fall, and happy may he think himself if he can escape unhurt from the ruins. If this should be the case with the Church of England, the Clergy cannot say that they have had no warning. They are labouring for its destruction much more than I am. If I be laying gunpowder, they are providing the match, and their part of the business seems to be in greater forwardness than mine."

"What a contrast is now exhibited between the two rival nations of France and England, and how many Englishmen blush to look upon it.

"Another foolish and unjust war, like that with America, which was chiefly urged by the Clergy (and such another, if the Court proposes, the Clergy will certainly second), can hardly fail to bring their affairs to a crisis†. If they be wise they will consider the signs of the times, and be very temperate in all their proceedings. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.*

"Let them take care lest, by too vigorously resisting our application for what was never intended to hurt them, and what in itself cannot possibly hurt them, they should, by their own violence do themselves the most serious evil. I have always been an avowed enemy of all Civil establishments of Christianity, but many Dissenters are not so: I foresee, however, that they soon will be, and that, by means of these discussions the sentiment will become more general, in the nation at large. It begins to be adopted even by the Catholics.

"The utility of Ecclesiastical Establishment is a Question that it behoves the Clergy always to keep out of sight as much as possible. But their rage against the Dissenters will obtrude it on the Public, and in consequence of this, if they proceed as they have begun, I should be sorry to insure their system twenty years longer. Whether I be more pleased, or displeased, with their present violence, let them now judge. The greater their violence, the greater is our confidence and final success.

"If any person, whose eye it may catch (the Preface), take an useful hint from it, it will be well; but an old and true Proverb says, "Experience keeps a dear School, but Fools will learn at no other." Nations, and all great bodies of men, are generally in this situation. They will learn very little except in this dear School."

† "When I was attending a Debate in the House of Lords in the course of the American war, and one of the Bishops was taking the part of the Minister
in

in which the Doctor talks of a train of gunpowder being laid to the Church Establishment, which would soon blow it up, if the danger were not avoided by the friends to the Establishment; the Doctor adds, and if that danger were avoided, and they refused to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, the Establishment would soon tumble about their ears. After paying Dr. Priestley all the compliments due to a man of his acknowledged literary abilities, Mr. Burke animadverted with great pointedness on the doctrine in the letter just read by him, which he considered as a serious indication on the part of Dr. Priestley, at least, of a determination to proceed, step by step, till the whole of the Church Establishment was levelled to its foundations. Having with all his powers of ingenuity painted this in the most forcible colours, Mr. Burke lastly produced Dr. Price's Sermon, whence he read an extract; he commented upon it with great severity, and complimented his Right Hon. Friend on the handsome way in which he had been liberal enough to treat a composition that deserved so little at his hands. He agreed with Mr. Fox, that the Church and the Pulpit ought to be kept pure and undefiled, and that politics had no business to be adverted to in either. With equal propriety might theological discussions, he said, be taken up in that House, and questions solely religious be debated there. From the proofs he had adduced, consisting of the extract from Dr. Price's Sermon, the Letter from Dr. Priestley, the avowed language of that Divine relative to religious Establishments in general, the Catechisms of Mr. Robinson and Mr. Palmer, and the letter of Mr. Fletcher, he drew this inference, *viz.* that the leading preachers among the Dissenters were avowed enemies to the Church of England; that they acknowledged their intentions, and that thence our Establishment appeared to be in much more serious danger than the Church of France was in a year or two ago. Mr. Burke reminded the House, that nothing

in it, the Duke of Richmond suddenly rose, and bade the Bishops beware of war. "War," said he, "is attended with expence: and if we be distressed, and must have money, we know where we may get it." Indeed, the addition of one hundred and fifty millions to the National Debt, occasioned by that war (which may be called a war of the Court and of the Clergy) I consider as a great step towards the destruction of Hierarchy. How powerful an instrument of reformation a heavy National Debt may be, we see in a late glorious Revolution in France. May all great evils produce as great a good."

could have been done to all appearance more safe and secure, than the hierarchy of France at a very short period since; every thing, therefore, that fell very far short of the present danger of the Church of England, ought to be regarded as a symptom of serious apprehension, and to challenge new caution and additional care. He said, he could not admit that his Right Hon. Friend had, with any sort of justice, ascribed the fatal incidents that had attended the Church of France, plundered and demolished in so disgraceful a manner, to the punishment which Providence, in its wisdom, had allotted for the wickedness and cruelty of the French Government, evinced in the revocation of the edict of Nantz. Such an idea was chimerical and profane. Was it consistent with the justice of Providence to punish Louis XVI. for the crime of Louis XIV.? As well might it be argued, that the danger that now threatened the Established Church of England, was a punishment inflicted by the hand of Providence on this country, for the persecutions of Laud, Bishop Whitcliffe, and all the horrid cruelties, burnings and murders, perpetrated under pretence of religious zeal in distant periods of our history! Mr. Burke complimented the Right Honourable Gentleman over the way, on the laudable attention he had shewn to the preservation of our religious establishment. It was, he said, peculiarly the duty of any Member of that House, standing in that Right Hon. Gentleman's situation, to guard with anxious care an object so intimately connected with the State as the Church of this country, and the Right Hon. Gentleman had discharged his duty with great zeal and great ability. That House also had the same duty imposed on them; they were equally bound to watch over the Church with due and constant attention; and this appeared to be a moment peculiarly requiring their interference. Had the question been brought forward ten years ago, Mr. Burke said he should have voted for the Repeal. At present a variety of circumstances made it appear imprudent to his mind to meddle with it. For the Dissenters, as a body, he entertained great esteem. There were among them many worthy and most respectable individuals. If they would come fairly forward, he would meet them, and let their actual desire and meaning be ascertained; he for one should be glad to sift their object, and if it were such as a rational Legislature could safely grant, he, at least, should have no objection. With several Dissenters he had long-lived in the greatest intimacy and happiness:
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indeed they were among those of his friends whom he valued most highly ; but at present, if the Test and Corporation Acts were repealed, some other Test ought to be substituted ; the present, he had always thought a bad and an insufficient Test to its end. He was convinced that it was an abuse of the Sacramental Rite, and the Sacramental Rite was too solemn an act for prostitution. Where conscience really existed, he said, it ought not to be wounded. By wounding a man's conscience, they annihilated the God within him (if he might be allowed so to express it), and violated him in his sanctuary. He professed himself ready to grant relief from oppression to all men, but unwilling to grant power, because power once possessed was generally abused. He declared he had a draught of another Test in his pocket, and he had formed an idea of moving the previous Question, with a view afterwards to move for a Committee to examine into the conduct of the Dissenters, the doctrines respecting the Established Church that they had recently avowed, and all that part of their conduct, to which he had adverted as a matter of established fact, and not of vague or wild assertion. Mr. Burke said, he was desirous of proceeding regularly, and with a due regard to parliamentary forms. He did not wish the House to rely on his facts, before he had established them by proof, of which he knew them to be capable. If, however, they should, upon investigation, not appear to be founded, he would hold himself bound to vote for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Mr. Burke said, he would be entirely governed by the House ; if they should think the best way of laying the Question at rest, would be by coming to a vote upon the motion, he would submit. [A loud cry of *Hear ! hear !* by way of approbation of that mode.] But if the House should be of opinion, that it would be better to move the previous Question on the present motion, and institute a Committee, so as to afford the Dissenters an opportunity of refuting what he had asserted (which he owned he himself thought the most eligible mode of proceeding) he would pursue that. Mr. Burke, in the course of his speech, illustrated and enlivened his argument by much brilliant expression, pertinent allusion, and striking observation. Among other examples to provoke the caution of the House, he instanced Lord George Gordon's mob, and the dangers that were then likely to have ensued under a blind idea that they were acting in support of the Established

Religion, when they were endeavouring to enforce the most intolerant persecution, and nearly levelled the Constitution in Church and State, the rabble having surrounded that House, and created a most serious alarm, lest the national credit should be destroyed by their demolishing the Bank. In a less important part of their conduct also, they had markedly described their drunken folly and irrational conduct, by selecting the Judges and Bishops for the peculiar objects of their vengeance. Mr. Burke dwelt on this event, as one that ought to stimulate to caution in the present circumstances; and after adding a great variety of observations that we have not even time to hint at, concluded a very able, eloquent and striking speech, with again declaring, that he should be governed by the House, but would not vote against the Motion, although he did not think this a fit moment for such a Motion to be put.

Mr. *W. Smith* said, he need not express his wonder that the Hon. Gent. should have applied so many harsh and unmerited epithets to a meritorious and respectable body of men, who had by no part of their conduct deserved to be treated with so much scurrility, when he recollected that the same Hon. Gentleman had attacked a whole Nation, while engaged in the very act of struggling for their Liberties, and called them "an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy." Mr. Smith observing that the House was extremely impatient for the question, said, he would not detain the House with going into a minute answer to the whole of a speech, which indeed was not worth an answer; but would merely content himself with saying a word or two to a few points that absolutely required some reply. Mr. Smith then said, that being one of the minority of that House alluded to in the debate, by being a Dissenter, and having all his life mixed with the Dissenters, he conceived he ought to know something of their principles; but he declared upon his honour, that he never heard any thing of the principles imputed to the Dissenters by the Hon. Gentleman. With regard to the political Catechism, so little was it countenanced, that he had never seen it before the Hon. Gentleman had produced it that day; Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith said, was a man of very extraordinary ability, but a very eccentric man, and a man by no means looked up to by Dissenters as a person qualified to lead them as a body, though a man of very fair character. With regard

regard to the Easter Association, Mr. Smith said, he had never heard of it, which was rather extraordinary, as he had for the last five years been in possession of a house within two miles of the place. In respect to Dr. Priestley's Letter, if Gentlemen would read it carefully, they would see that the alarming point of view in which the Hon. Gentleman has placed it, was wholly owing to the artful manner in which the Hon. Gentleman had contrived to supply it with innuendoes. The text was sufficiently innocent; but the Hon. Gentleman had been ingenious enough to cram it with innuendoes of the most violent and inflammatory nature. It was true, the train of gunpowder was mentioned; but that was, because Dr. Priestley, finding the manner in which his mention of the train of gunpowder had been misunderstood and misrepresented, was necessarily obliged to introduce the mention of it again, in order to explain that his gunpowder was nothing more than a figurative expression, and only meant reason and argument. Mr. Smith was proceeding to give farther replies to the different parts of Mr. Burke's argument, but being informed that the Right Honourable Gentleman was not in the House, he declared he would save the time of the House, by abandoning an argument, which was so self-evidently inapplicable and incongruous, that it was not indeed necessary to have offered a reply to it. With regard to the observation of an Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Powis), that a Dissenter being obliged to take the Test on entering into office, was nothing more than undergoing the same forms that every Magistrate, from the most inferior up to the Sovereign himself, was obliged to undergo. The cases were by no means parallel. The Sovereign, taking his Coronation Oath, could not be compared to a Dissenter's being compelled to take the sacrament. Mr. Smith spent some little time in general argument in favour of the repeal, and contended, that it was illiberal to stigmatize a whole body of people, because one or two of them, whose zeal might carry them too far, had exceeded those bounds which the more cool and temperate would certainly confine themselves to.

Mr. Smith (Member for Worcester) rose to trouble the House with a few words upon the present question, because he found himself in a predicament in which it was necessary to give a vote different to what he gave upon a former occasion; he felt it a duty incumbent upon

upon him to follow the wishes and instructions of his constituents, whenever he could obey them consistent with the duty that he owed to his country at large. He said, if in voting against the present question, he should deprive for a time a numerous body of loyal subjects, of certain rights to which they conceive themselves entitled, but of which a jealous apprehension of ecclesiastical security had found it expedient in less enlightened days to deprive them, he did but yield an acquiescence to the opinion of many able men, who oppose the repeal of the Acts of which the Dissenters complain, and consent to their continuing in force, in compliance with the wishes of a numerous and respectable body of his constituents, who are not as yet convinced, that the necessity which made it wise and expedient to pass them, has entirely ceased to exist: in obeying, therefore, their instructions, which it was his duty to do, he could not do an injury to his country. He must take notice of an argument, or rather an assertion, which had been pressed with force in the debate, that it is at the eve of a general election the Dissenters take an opportunity of applying for a redress of their grievances. Sir, if that argument or assertion is intended to have any weight against them, it must be by an insinuation, that they mean by their influence at elections to awe and bias a determination, contrary to the cool judgment and opinion of many Members. No assertion can be more ill-founded, and for many reasons; a very strong one is, that the Dissenters, forming but a very small body, in comparison with those who are in full possession of their natural rights, cannot by any means make it a popular question. Another reason is, that it is not the kind of question likely (against old prejudices) to catch support at first sight, but must depend, for its advocates, upon the cool and deliberate judgment of men, attentively considering the necessity of restrictive laws, at the time they were enacted, and comparing that necessity with the present times. There is another reason against its being a popular question, (unless a new mode of reasoning is to arise, different from the feelings and experience of all ages and parties that have existed), that a majority should complain, because a minority are not admitted to an equal participation of rights with them; he could at least bear testimony to the views and intentions of the Dissenters, and to their liberality of sentiment. Their directions were not of the compulsive kind, or formed to gain any advantage from

from the times, as a large and respectable body of them amongst his constituents had not wished him (though they by no means relaxed in their claims upon the justice of Parliament) to persevere against the instructions of a more numerous, as well as a very respectable meeting of constituents, even in support of their pretensions, and his former vote for the repeal.

Mr. *Wilberforce* said, that had he been able to catch the Speaker's eye earlier in the day, he should have gone at large into the question; but that having been in the House ever since eleven o'clock in the morning (with a short interval), he was too much exhausted to take up the time of the House for more than a very few moments (it being past one o'clock); yet he felt that it became him, in his situation, not to give altogether a silent vote. He rose, therefore, merely to declare, that he should decidedly vote against the motion of the Right Hon. Gentleman, to whose allusion also to himself it had been his intention to reply, and he trusted in a manner perfectly satisfactory, but that also he must leave for the present: the question was now brought into a narrow compass; an establishment of religion was conceived to be adviseable at least, if not necessary; and the only thing at issue was, Whether this would be endangered by granting the Dissenter's request, under all the circumstances of the present case and the present time? It was his firm conviction that it would, and therefore he should resist the application.

Mr. *Tierney* said, as he represented a Borough in which there were several hundreds of Dissenters who were his constituents, he thought it his indispensable duty to rise and rescue them from the imputation of forcing a Test on their Representative. Mr. Tierney declared, that he had never any connection with Dissenters otherwise than with his Constituents; but that though there were so many of them of the Dissenting Class, they had not attempted to impose any Test upon him: on the contrary, they had informed him, that after his election they should be glad to see him, and talk with him on the subject, wishing him to vote for the Repeal, unless he had any particular objection. This explanation, Mr. Tierney said, he thought absolutely due to his Constituents.

Sir *William Dolben* rose to rescue the Clergy from the imputations which he conceived to have been cast upon them by Mr. Fox, in his observations on the conduct of the High Churchmen, at different periods

periods of our history. Sir William went into a short history of the conduct of our Clergy in the reign of Charles the First, and contended that they had stood by the Monarch and the legal Government, till, by the machinations of the Dissenters, the Prince, the State, the Church, and even the Constitution itself had been involved in one common ruin. Sir William also defended the conduct of the Clergy at other periods, to which he imagined Mr. Fox had alluded.

Mr. Fox rose as soon as Sir William sat down, and said, exhausted as he was and fatigued in body, he could not, even at that late hour, suffer the Question to be put without saying a word or two in explanation in regard to certain points in which he appeared to have been misunderstood; and first, with regard to two points which the Right Hon. Gentleman had misconceived him; rather, he supposed, from his having inaccurately put the argument, than from any intention to misrepresent what had fallen from him, because he admitted that the Hon. Gent. had dealt fairly with what he had said he had conceived to have been his meaning. Mr. Fox declared, that having been aware of the Right Hon. Gentleman's argument last year, and the points on which he had laid most stress, he had begun his speech with laying down the Principle of Toleration in opposition to the Principle of Persecution, in order to meet the objection, which he foresaw the Right Hon. Gentleman, for the reasons he had already stated, would take advantage of, as he had done before. In explaining his ideas of the Principle of Toleration, as opposed to the Principle of Persecution, Mr. Fox said, he had endeavoured to shew, that if the Principle of Persecution, as generally received and understood, was originally a right Principle, it would go to the length of proving that all that had happened in the reign of Charles the Ninth, the massacre of Paris, and the murder of the Huguenots, was a mild, benevolent, and merciful transaction; and all the cruelties perpetrated in Smithfield and elsewhere, acts of the same charitable and warrantable nature. This was so palpable a proof that the original principle was a wrong one, that he had abandoned it as soon as he had shewn to what lengths it would go, and contended on the ground of Toleration, perfectly conscious, however, at the same time, that the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts would not fairly come within that principle. If, however, it would not, strictly speaking, come within the extent of the true principle of religious toleration,

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it was clearly an act of justice due to the Dissenters. What he had principally combated, Mr. Fox said, was the unfairness of acting upon the inferences which other men drew from the religious opinions of the Dissenters, and not from their conduct. He denied that men had any right whatever to prejudge the conduct of others, where that prejudication ran directly contrary to their declarations. This was the doctrine he would abide by, and if it were contended that the doctrine was absurd, he acknowledged he was chargeable with that absurdity. The Right Hon. Gentleman had also endeavoured to prove that Members of Parliament, and every person who entered into an office, be his religion what it would, submitted to a Test, and made a religious appeal, because he took an oath; but what religion did he appeal to? Every man appealed to his own religion. The Jew was sworn upon the Old Testament, a Protestant upon the New Testament, and a Quaker made his affirmation. Was that like men of different persuasions and different modes of faith submitting to the sacramental Test? Having dispatched the points in which Mr. Pitt appeared to have misunderstood, or mistated him, Mr. Fox adverted to the argument of an Honourable Baronet, who had thought it necessary to set up an elaborate general defence of the Clergy, when no general attack had been made. He had talked of the Church when the Church acted as a party, but he had reprobated peculiarly the High Churchmen, whose principles and whose conduct had uniformly proved inimical and adverse to the Constitution and the civil rights of the subject. He was perfectly ready to give every degree of credit to the Clergy of what was denominated the Low Church, since many of them had proved themselves most worthy members, and been distinguishingly instrumental in the business of the Revolution and the establishment of political freedom. Many of the Low Church Clergy were also, he understood, friends to the motion he meant to conclude with. Mr. Fox next took notice of Mr. Powys's observation, that the subject of the two bills had better been separated. He owned himself rather surprised at the observation, because he thought the subject of each so closely connected and involved, that they naturally presented themselves as most fit for consideration and discussion together. If, however, they were to be viewed separately, Mr. Fox said, he should have deemed the Corporation Act the most important, in

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a constitutional point of view, inasmuch as the restricting the subject in the exercise of a natural right ought to be regarded in that House with much more jealousy than the restricting the King in any part of the exercise of his Prerogative. What he had heard, Mr. Fox said with most concern, was the speech of his Right Hon. Friend behind him, which had filled him with grief and shame. He had before declared, that the best part of the political knowledge he was in possession of, he had learnt from his Right Hon. Friend, by whom he had been instructed in forming his political principles; but, mortified as he had been by the speech of his Right Hon. Friend, he had received this consolation at least from it, that there was not a single principle that he had laid down which his Right Hon. Friend had not, in the course of his speech, avowed. His Right Hon. Friend also had declared, that ten years ago he would have voted for the Question, which only proved that he (Mr. Fox) had retained his opinion on the subject ten years longer than his Right Hon. Friend. He had, in his opening, stated his own principles, and argued from an application of the inferences deducible from those principles; his Right Hon. Friend, on the contrary, had built his speech altogether on suspicions, invectives, pamphlets, and anecdotes, which he had embellished with that eloquence, and all those charms of oratory which were inseparable from his Hon. Friend's mode of speaking. With regard to the anecdote of the Duke of Richmond, he knew not whether it was correctly quoted or not; he understood his Right Hon. Friend, however, to have quoted the noble Duke's words; but he saw no great analogy between the story of a noble Duke's having, during the American war, made a singular speech to the Bishops, and the argument of that day. The fact he conceived to be this: His Hon. Friend, from the effect of his too great sensibility, and a confused and mistaken idea of what had passed in Paris, suffered himself to be led astray by his feelings; and though, if the old despotism of the country had existed, he was persuaded his Right Hon. Friend would have been the first man to have stood up and deplored the miseries of the French subjects, he now too eagerly caught hold of those objects, which the state of ruin, the Government and the Country was unavoidably plunged into, for the short period during which the settlement of the new Constitution was working presented

sented to his imagination, and thence lost the energy of his natural judgment in the contemplation of the state of the Church and its beggared Ecclesiastics. Mr. Fox said, he should be as much displeased as any man at seeing Divines of any description, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, take part in the elections of Members of Parliament ; but he was rather astonished that the objection to their conduct, respecting their assuring the Members that they would support those who should prove themselves well affected to Religious and Civil Liberty, should come from the other side of the House, where no less than three of the Hon. Gentlemen who had spoken in the debate, had changed their opinions since the question was last discussed, one of them assigning no other reason, than that the Question had shifted hands, and that he had the honour of introducing it ; and the two others acknowledging, that they were in their own minds friendly to the Question ; but, in obedience to the instructions of their constituents, they had felt themselves *bound* to oppose it. Surely this was a Test forced upon them as much as that complained of, as attempted to have been forced upon Candidates for seats at the next General Election, by the Dissenters. Mr. Fox said, with regard to the stress laid on the language held by Dr. Priestley, expressive of his dislike of establishments, he maintained there was no criminality in that manly declaration of Dr. Priestley's individual opinion, nor in any man's declaring that he disliked any part of our civil institution, so that he did not bring his opinion into action ; at least, if there were any criminality into such conduct, Mr. Fox desired to be considered as a participator in it. He owned he was not a little surprised that his Right Hon. Friend should have produced the letter of Mr. Fletcher from Bolton, because if ever there was a paper that furnished a strong argument in favour of the Question, Mr. Fletcher's letter was that paper. Mr. Fox declared he never had heard of Mr. Fletcher's name or conduct before ; but surely if any argument could be relied on, that which he had urged ought to be considered as essential towards proving that those Dissenters who deserve well of the Legislature, were entitled to their favour, and to be separated from those others who were not inclined to be content with the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Let the House pursue the conduct of his Right Hon. Friend, who, he well remembered, had

done himself infinite honour in a debate during the American War, by laying down a doctrine that *prima facie* appeared to be an absolute paradox, though actually founded on the soundest policy. The subject was a division of Massachusetts Bay from the Province of New York, and other Provinces. His Hon. Friend had scouted the idea, and said, "what! separate Massachusetts Bay from New-York, for the purpose of adapting that weak and absurd maxim, *divide et impera*? I'll never consent to it, but I'll agree to divide America." The burst was immense, the House imagining his Right Hon. Friend had made a blunder; but how did his Right Hon. Friend explain himself? By directly saying, "I'll divide America, but not by parting the Provinces of Massachusetts Bay from the other Provinces. No. I divide America thus: a band on the Provinces which manifest disloyalty and dissatisfaction, but preserve those which are affected and loyal, not by coercion, but by granting them all they wish for." His Hon. Friend's advice was founded in the truest wisdom, and in the present instance he would advise the House to adopt it. Separate the Dissenters, and break their union; abandon those who are unreasonable, and grant to such as are moderate, like Mr. Fletcher, all they require. Mr. Fox lastly took notice of the manner in which his declaration, "that he verily believed, that if the present application of the Dissenters were complied with, there would be an end of all claim on their part to the Legislature for indulgence," had been treated; he desired to be understood, as having offered the House no pledge whatever, upon the authority of the Dissenters; he declared, he had merely stated his own speculative opinion: an opinion which the House would lend just as much credit to as they thought proper.

He should not, he said, be eager to pledge himself to the House on any authority whatsoever, if it were only from the unfair way in which he had that day seen the assuance of the Dissenting Ministers made some years since taken advantage of. When the Bill that passed about fourteen years ago, respecting Dissenting Teachers, and Schoolmasters, had been presented, the application came specifically from the *Dissenting Ministers*; and Dr. Kippis, in the Extract the Right Hon. Gentleman had read from a pamphlet in the course of his

his speech, had declared that they, namely the *Dissenting Ministers*, would apply no more for *themselves*; but they had not precluded themselves from the right of joining with the dissenting Laity in applying a matter of general relief; that right they had in the present instance exercised.

Mr. Fox was just about to close his speech, when suddenly recollecting himself, he said, he had been near forgetting a point alluded to by his Right Hon. Friend, which was exceedingly material, and which he should have been extremely sorry to have left unnoticed, viz. the allusion to Lord George Gordon, and the riots in 1780. He well remembered his Right Hon. Friend's conduct on that occasion, and remembered it with satisfaction, as it deserved applause and honour, because his Right Hon. Friend had, in spite of the madness and rage of the mob, persevered in the purpose the House was then engaged in, viz. administering an extent of toleration to the Roman Catholics; but by referring to that period, his Right Hon. Friend surely forgot that, according to the argument of the present day, the Clergy of the Established Church stood in the shoes of the mob, the Dissenters in those of the poor persecuted Roman Catholics.

Mr. Fox pursued the elucidation of this position for a second or two, and at length concluded a most able reply, with repeating his congratulations on himself for having been selected by those (who had acted rather as his enemies than his friends) to fight their battles, and with assuring them that so sincerely was he a friend to their cause, that he should be ever ready to take the field for them again, whenever the Dissenters should be able to convince him that they were, in other respects, oppressed or aggrieved.

As soon as the gallery was cleared of strangers, the House divided,

Ayes,	—	—	105
Noes,	—	—	294
			—
	Majority,		189

The House adjourned.

The List of those Members who voted for and against the Repeal, is unavoidably delayed for a few days.



